

Residents Riled About Roundabout

By Lesley Mahoney

Abutters to a proposed British-style roundabout at the intersection of Congress and Lincoln Streets are concerned about how the project will affect their properties.

Property owners who would be required to give up portions of their land to accommodate the roundabout, which would be 18-feet in diameter including a three-foot apron cement circle pavement with triangular traffic islands, question the state's proposed realignment of the dangerous intersection identified as one of the state's top 1,000 accident sites.

Currently, traffic at the intersection is controlled by a blinking yellow light on Congress Street (Route 14) and stop signs at either entrance to Lincoln Street. The intersection is 230 feet from the Route 3 access ramps.

Public Works Director Walter Tonaszuck said the state's proposal would include minimal signage and create what he called "traffic calming."

"It's designed to force traffic to go around the circle," he said. "The whole idea is to slow all the traffic down, so it merges and separates it in an orderly progression."

To make room for the roundabout, however, the state would have to take private property on all four corners of the intersec-

tion. Cost of the state-funded project is estimated at \$120,000 before taking into consideration compensation to property owners.

While Lawrence Boisvert, who lives at 134 Congress Street, concedes there are serious traffic problems at that intersection he said he is not sure the state's proposal is the best solution. If the project goes forward as proposed, Boisvert's home will be located just 12-feet from the newly designed roadway. As it is, Boisvert said he repairs "section after section" of fence damaged in accidents.

"My only problem is that I'm too close to the corner... People are saying you have to do something that's safe for everyone — everyone except for one person," Boisvert said in a phone interview this week.

State Highway Engineer Peter Kutrubes said in a public meeting on the proposed project last week most of the property in question is already owned by the state. He said only two-feet is land currently owned by Boisvert.

"I've been cutting the grass for 20 years," Boisvert said in response.

Kutrubes said the state would be willing to compensate Boisvert for the land and suggested building a stone masonry wall at the property line.

Boisvert, however, was not impressed.

"I want it to be safer, but I don't want it to look bad," he said adding he would consider allowing the state to move his house or build him a new one.

More than half the accidents recorded at the site involve at least one vehicle attempting to turn north on Lincoln Street. Seventy-four percent of the vehicles involved in accidents were traveling north on Congress Street at the time of collision.

Boisvert said he recalls one fatality involving an elderly couple. He said he is used to witnessing the dangers at the intersection first-hand.

"I'm the one who usually calls the police when accidents happen," he said adding he has pulled bleeding people from their cars.

Andrew Johnson, who lives at 284 Lincoln St. with his wife and two children and also rents out a house near the intersection.

"It's definitely not a safe spot," he said. "I can't tell you how many times I've called the police."

Johnson said he is especially concerned about the Boisvert's situation because their home is already close to the road. He said he foresees cars "going right into their front door."

Kutrubes said statistics show the proposed project will slow traffic and reduce accidents. If

collisions do occur, he said they will be much less severe.

While the proposed Duxbury project would constitute the first roundabout in the state, one or two others are currently in the design stages. Kutrubes said roundabouts have been implemented on the west coast and are also very common in England and fairly common in Australia.

Because only about 10,500 vehicles pass through the intersection daily, he said the roundabout design — which is not recommended for roads traveled by more than 15,000 vehicles per day — will work for the Duxbury intersection.

Johnson, however, remains skeptical. He said traffic is likely to increase when MBTA service goes on line.

The state's proposal is actually a scaled down version of the original plans in response to a heavy truck ban on Lincoln, Franklin and Acorn Streets slated to go into effect later this year. That ban, approved by selectmen in Marshfield and Duxbury, is still awaiting state approval.

Kutrubes said if Duxbury selectmen approve the roundabout, the project could begin in spring of 1998. A public hearing on the project is set for 7:45 p.m. Monday at Town Hall.